



# IMPOSTER

*syndrome*

**Causes | Signs & Symptoms | Coping Strategies**

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# introduction

Imposter syndrome is a psychological pattern where an individual doubts their accomplishments and has a persistent fear of being exposed as a "fraud." This feeling of inadequacy can lead to a lack of confidence, anxiety, and a decrease in overall well-being.

Imposter syndrome is not a clinical disorder, but it is a common phenomenon that affects people from all walks of life.

Statistics show that around 70% of people experience imposter syndrome at some point in their lives, and it affects both men and women equally. It is especially common among high achievers and people who work in competitive environments, such as academia, business, and the arts.

It is important to address imposter syndrome because it can hold us back from achieving our full potential and enjoying our successes. The good news is that imposter syndrome is treatable, and with the right strategies and support, it is possible to overcome it.

# CAUSES OF IMPOSTER *syndrome*

Imposter syndrome can arise from various causes, including:

- **Perfectionism:** The belief that one must be perfect to succeed or be accepted can lead to imposter feelings because no one can be perfect all the time.
- **Fear of failure:** The fear of making mistakes or failing can lead to self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy.
- **Childhood experiences:** Childhood experiences of being criticized or not feeling good enough can carry over into adulthood and contribute to imposter syndrome.
- **Socialization and gender roles:** Society's expectations of gender roles can contribute to imposter syndrome because women, in particular, may feel like they don't belong in certain fields or positions.
- **Cultural factors:** Cultural beliefs that value humility and modesty can lead to downplaying one's achievements and contribute to imposter feelings.

# SIGNS AND *symptoms*

"I have written eleven books, but each time I think, 'uh oh, they're going to find out now. I've run a game on everybody, and they're going to find me out.' "

MAYA ANGELOU

Some signs and symptoms of imposter syndrome include:

- **Negative self-talk:** Negative self-talk involves having thoughts such as "I'm not good enough" or "I don't deserve this."
- **Self-doubt:** Self-doubt involves questioning one's abilities and accomplishments.
- **Difficulty accepting praise:** People with imposter syndrome may find it difficult to accept praise or compliments because they believe they don't deserve it.
- **Procrastination:** Procrastination can be a result of imposter feelings because it is a way of avoiding tasks that may expose one's perceived inadequacies.
- **Overworking:** Overworking is another way people with imposter syndrome cope because they believe that working harder and longer will compensate for their perceived lack of ability.

# COPING strategies

If you are struggling with imposter syndrome, here are some coping strategies that may help:

- **Recognize & acknowledge imposter feelings:** this can be the first step in overcoming imposter feelings. It is important to understand that these feelings are common and that you are not alone.
- **Identify & challenge negative self-talk:** Identify the negative self-talk that contributes to imposter feelings and challenge those thoughts with evidence that supports your abilities and accomplishments.
- **Reframe beliefs about failure:** recognize that failure is a natural part of the learning process and that it does not define your worth as a person.
- **Seek support from others:** Seek support from friends, family, a coach or a therapist who can provide encouragement and help you gain perspective.
- **Practice self-care and self-compassion:** try to engage in activities that promote your well-being, such as exercise, meditation, or journaling. Be kind to yourself and give yourself credit for your accomplishments.

As a coach, it is important for me to understand and recognize the impact of imposter syndrome on my clients. Imposter syndrome can negatively affect performance, motivation, and overall well-being.

One of my roles is to help clients identify and challenge negative self-talk, reframe beliefs about failure, and set realistic goals by focusing on progress rather than perfection



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## conclusion

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In conclusion, it is essential to understand the impact of imposter syndrome on your goals and progress. Seek out the tools and support you will need to overcome it. Build your self-confidence and recognize your strengths, empower yourself to achieve your full potential and succeed in your personal and professional life.

# ASK *yourself*

Imposter syndrome is a common phenomenon that many people experience, particularly when they are in new or challenging situations. If you are struggling with imposter syndrome, here are some questions you can ask yourself to help combat those feelings:

- What evidence do I have that I am qualified or competent in this area?
- What feedback have I received from others that supports my abilities and expertise?
- What are some of my past successes that demonstrate my skills and knowledge?
- What skills or experience do I have that make me (uniquely) qualified for this opportunity?
- What am I assuming about myself that may not be true or accurate?
- What can I learn from any mistakes or setbacks I've experienced in this area?



...continued

- What are some steps I can take to gain more confidence or knowledge in this area?
- What would I say to a friend or colleague who was experiencing similar feelings of self-doubt?
- How can I reframe my thoughts and focus on my strengths rather than my weaknesses?

Notes:

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